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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To improve cybersecurity practices and improve digital literacy among
veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. SLOTKIN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

A BILL

To improve cybersecurity practices and improve digital
literacy among veterans, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Online Infor-
5 mation and Cybersecurity Empowerment Act of 2022” or
6 the “VOICE Act of 2022”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Researchers have documented persistent,
2 pervasive, and coordinated online targeting of mem-
3 bers of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their fami-
4 lies by foreign adversaries seeking to undermine
5 United States democracy in part because of public
6 trust placed in these communities. Government
7 agencies and researchers have also documented the
8 targeting of veterans by fraudsters, especially online
9 scammers, seeking to steal their government bene-
10 fits.

11 (2) According to the Federal Trade Commis-
12 sion, fraud costs veterans, members of the Armed
13 Forces, and their families \$267,000,000 in 2021.
14 This was a 162 percent increase from 2020 and the
15 median loss for these scam victims was \$600, 20
16 percent higher than for the median loss for the gen-
17 eral public. According to a 2017 survey conducted
18 by the American Association of Retired Persons
19 (AARP) veterans are twice as likely to unknowingly
20 participate in a scam compared to the general popu-
21 lation and an estimated 16 percent of veterans re-
22 port having losing some money to fraud, while 78
23 percent report encountering scams that have explic-
24 itly designed to exploit their military service.

1 (3) At the same time, adversaries from Russia,
2 China, and Iran are using information warfare to in-
3 fluence democracies across the world, and extremist
4 organizations often use digital communications to re-
5 cruit members. Influence campaigns from foreign
6 adversaries reached tens of millions of voters during
7 the 2016 and 2018 elections with racially and divi-
8 sively targeted messages. The United States can
9 fight these influences by ensuring that citizens of
10 the United States possess the necessary skills to dis-
11 cern disinformation and misinformation and protect
12 themselves from foreign influence campaigns.

13 (4) The Select Committee on Intelligence of the
14 Senate found in its investigation of the interference
15 in the 2016 election that social media posts by the
16 Internet Research Agency (IRA) of Russia reached
17 tens of millions of voters in 2016 and were meant
18 to pit the people of the United States against one
19 another and sow discord. Volume II of the Commit-
20 tee's investigation found that the Internet Research
21 Agency's Instagram account with the second largest
22 reach used the handle "@american.veterans" and
23 was "aimed at patriotic, conservative audiences, col-
24 lected 215,680 followers, and generated nearly 18.5
25 million engagements."

1 (5) A 2019 investigative report by the Vietnam
2 Veterans of America (VVA) titled “An Investigation
3 into Foreign Entities who are Targeting Troops and
4 Veterans Online”, found that the Internet Research
5 Agency targeted veterans and the followers of sev-
6 eral congressionally chartered veterans service orga-
7 nizations with at least 113 advertisements during
8 and following the 2016 election and that “this rep-
9 resents a fraction of the Russian activity that tar-
10 geted this community with divisive propaganda.”.
11 The report also found that foreign actors have been
12 impersonating veterans through social-media ac-
13 counts and interacting with veterans and veterans
14 groups on social media to spread propaganda and
15 disinformation. To counter these acts, Vietnam Vet-
16 erans of America recommended that the Department
17 of Veterans Affairs “immediately develop plans to
18 make the cyber-hygiene of veterans an urgent pri-
19 ority within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
20 The VA must educate and train veterans on per-
21 sonal cybersecurity: how to mitigate vulnerabilities,
22 vigilantly maintain safe practices, and recognize
23 threats, including how to identify instances of online
24 manipulation.”.

1 (6) The Cyberspace Solarium Commission, a bi-
2 cameral and bipartisan commission, established by
3 section 1652 of the John S. McCain National De-
4 fense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (Pub-
5 lic Law 115–232), concluded in its finished report
6 that the “U.S. government should promote digital
7 literacy, civics education, and public awareness to
8 build societal resilience to foreign, malign cyber-en-
9 abled information operations and that the U.S. gov-
10 ernment must ensure that individual Americans have
11 both the digital literacy tools and the civics edu-
12 cation they need to secure their networks and their
13 democracy from cyber-enabled information oper-
14 ations.”. The report recommended that Congress au-
15 thorize grant programs to do this.

16 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

17 It is the sense of Congress that, given the threat for-
18 eign influence campaigns pose for United States democ-
19 racy, the effect of online scams on veterans and their fami-
20 lies, and the findings and recommendations of Congress,
21 Federal agencies, and experts, Congress should imme-
22 diately act to pass legislative measures to increase digital
23 and media literacy, as well as cybersecurity best practices
24 among veterans of the United States.

1 **SEC. 4. VETERANS CYBERSECURITY AND DIGITAL LIT-**
2 **ERACY GRANT PROGRAM.**

3 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall es-
4 tablish a program to promote digital citizenship and media
5 literacy, through which the Secretary shall award grants
6 to eligible entities to enable those eligible entities to carry
7 out the activities described in subsection (c).

8 (b) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity seeking a grant
9 under the program required by subsection (a) shall submit
10 to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in
11 such manner, and containing such information as the Sec-
12 retary may require, including, at a minimum the following:

13 (1) A description of the activities the eligible
14 entity intends to carry out with the grant funds.

15 (2) An estimate of the costs associated with
16 such activities.

17 (3) Such other information and assurances as
18 the Secretary may require.

19 (c) ACTIVITIES.—An eligible entity shall use the
20 amount of a grant awarded under the program required
21 by subsection (a) to carry out one or more of the following
22 activities to promote cybersecurity best practices and in-
23 crease digital and media literacy among veterans:

24 (1) Develop competencies in cybersecurity best
25 practices.

1 (2) Develop media literacy and digital citizen-
2 ship competencies by promoting veterans’—

3 (A) research and information fluency;

4 (B) critical thinking and problem solving
5 skills;

6 (C) technology operations and concepts;

7 (D) information and technological literacy;

8 (E) concepts of media and digital represen-
9 tation and stereotyping;

10 (F) understanding of explicit and implicit
11 media and digital messages;

12 (G) understanding of values and points of
13 view that are included and excluded in media
14 and digital content;

15 (H) understanding of how media and dig-
16 ital content may influence ideas and behaviors;

17 (I) understanding of the importance of ob-
18 taining information from multiple media
19 sources and evaluating sources for quality;

20 (J) understanding how information on dig-
21 ital platforms can be altered through algo-
22 rithms, editing, and augmented reality;

23 (K) ability to create media and digital con-
24 tent in civically and socially responsible ways;
25 and

1 (L) understanding of influence campaigns
2 conducted by foreign adversaries and the tactics
3 employed by foreign adversaries for conducting
4 influence campaigns.

5 (d) REPORTING.—

6 (1) REPORTS BY GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Each re-
7 cipient of a grant under the program required by
8 subsection (a) shall, not later than one year after
9 the date on which the recipient first receives funds
10 pursuant to the grant, submit to the Secretary a re-
11 port describing the activities the recipient carried
12 out using grant funds and the effectiveness of those
13 activities.

14 (2) REPORT BY THE SECRETARY.—Not later
15 than 90 days after the date on which the Secretary
16 receives the last report the Secretary expects to re-
17 ceive under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall sub-
18 mit to Congress a report describing the activities
19 carried out under this section and the effectiveness
20 of those activities.

21 (e) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
22 gress that the Secretary should—

23 (1) establish and maintain a list of eligible enti-
24 ties that receive a grant under the program required
25 by subsection (a), and individuals designated by

1 those eligible entities as participating individuals;
2 and

3 (2) make that list available to those eligible en-
4 tities and participating individuals in order to pro-
5 mote communication and further exchange of infor-
6 mation regarding sound digital citizenship and
7 media literacy practices among recipients of grants
8 under the program required by subsection (a).

9 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
10 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
11 \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023, 2025, and
12 2027.

13 (g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14 (1) CYBERSECURITY BEST PRACTICES.—The
15 term “cybersecurity best practices” means practices
16 and steps that users of computers and other internet
17 connected devices take to maintain and improve on-
18 line security, maintain the proper functioning of
19 computers devices, and protect computers and de-
20 vices from cyberattacks and unauthorized use.

21 (2) DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP.—The term “digital
22 citizenship” means the ability to—

23 (A) safely, responsibly, and ethically use
24 communication technologies and digital infor-
25 mation technology tools and platforms;

1 (B) create and share media content using
2 principles of social and civic responsibility and
3 with awareness of the legal and ethical issues
4 involved; and

5 (C) participate in the political, economic,
6 social, and cultural aspects of life related to
7 technology, communications, and the digital
8 world by consuming and creating digital con-
9 tent, including media.

10 (3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
11 ty” means—

12 (A) a civil society organization, including
13 community groups, nongovernmental organiza-
14 tions, nonprofit organization, labor organiza-
15 tions, indigenous groups, charitable organiza-
16 tions, professional associations, and founda-
17 tions; and

18 (B) congressionally chartered veterans
19 service organizations.

20 (4) MEDIA LITERACY.—The term “media lit-
21 eracy” means the ability to—

22 (A) access relevant and accurate informa-
23 tion through media in a variety of forms;

24 (B) critically analyze media content and
25 the influences of different forms of media;

1 (C) evaluate the comprehensiveness, rel-
2 evance, credibility, authority, and accuracy of
3 information;

4 (D) make educated decisions based on in-
5 formation obtained from media and digital
6 sources;

7 (E) operate various forms of technology
8 and digital tools; and

9 (F) reflect on how the use of media and
10 technology may affect private and public life.

11 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
12 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.